

Daniel Figueroa for his dedication, honorable service and his daily commitment to making western New York a safer place, and guaranteeing a better tomorrow.

COLLEGE ACCESS AND
OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2006

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 609) to amend and extend the Higher Education Act of 1965:

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the amendment offered by my colleagues Representatives KIRK and LARSEN. They are to be commended for drawing attention to the importance of student exchange and language education programs, particularly related to Chinese and Arabic. In the 21st century world, China and the Middle East are critically important.

I share their support for language and culture education programs to help equip today's young people for the global marketplace. I was pleased to be able to help bring Japanese and Chinese language programs to the Fairfax County Public School system in northern Virginia. During the early 1980s Japan was the primary United States competitor. In an effort to understand how to help United States businesses remain competitive in an expanding global economy, especially with Japan, I wrote to the top 500 U.S. companies asking for their feedback.

The overwhelming response was that U.S. businesses were having difficulty finding qualified people who spoke Japanese and understood that culture. It became clear that the younger generation of Americans who would be the business leaders of tomorrow needed the training to compete with Japan. To help enlarge the pool of fluent Japanese speakers and broaden understanding of the Japanese culture, I worked with the U.S. Department of Education to establish language immersion programs in northern Virginia in 1988.

As a result, Fox Mill and Great Falls Elementary schools, all in the Fairfax County Public School system, began offering Japanese immersion programs. In these programs, students spend half the school day in their subjects learning to converse in Japanese and the other half in English. I insert for the RECORD excerpts from my congressional newsletters from 1988 announcing the launch of the Japanese language immersion program.

Today, the United States' main global competitor is no longer Japan. China has assumed that position. As we did in the 1980s with Japanese language immersion, we need to replicate today with the Chinese language. The Chinese program will expand and build upon the success of the Japanese immersion program, which helped America counter the serious competition it faced from Japan. In addition to having the opportunity to improve academic performance, students also will have the chance to learn a language that will equip them to compete in the global economy. With one-quarter of the world's population living in China, it is imperative that America's rising

business leaders learn the Chinese language and culture.

Studies have shown that students who participate in language immersion programs do well academically. This amendment highlights a critical area in preparing our young people—as Tom Friedman so aptly put it in his best-selling book “The World is Flat”—to develop language skills to help our country meet the challenge being posed by China and India.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Kirk/Larsen amendment and thank the gentlemen for their good work on highlighting this important issue.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY KEY TO
COMPETITIVENESS

Our national trade deficit has caused deserved concern. We must not only make sure that American companies are on a level playing field with their foreign competitors, but also provide that American companies are equipped to compete in the international marketplace. The key to this is the education and training of our young people.

We must educate our young people in the languages and cultures of other nations, so that in the future American businesses are able to market products abroad and negotiate with foreign counterparts.

I have been pleased to work with our local school systems to expand the foreign language courses offered. The language of Japan, which has the largest trade surplus with the United States of any of our trading partners, is now offered at many of our area high schools. In addition, if a recently submitted grant application to the Department of Education is approved, Japanese, Spanish, and French may soon be taught to kindergarten students in some local schools.

These youngsters who are able to study the languages and cultures of other peoples of the world will be the business leaders of tomorrow, negotiating and devising strategies to sell American products all over the world.

EDUCATION GRANT FOCUSES ON FUTURE
LEADERS

The U.S. Department of Education recently awarded a \$175,000 grant to George Mason University to begin a foreign language immersion program in Fairfax and Arlington counties public elementary schools.

I was pleased to have worked with local school and GMU officials in support of this program which would be one of the first of its kind in the country to focus on kindergarten students for intensive training in Japanese, Spanish and French.

Under the program, six kindergarten teachers and six first grade teachers would be trained in language instruction and assigned to selected classes in participating schools.

Students participating in the program would spend up to one half of each school day being taught the target language.

I sought funding for this program because of my concern about U.S. competitiveness abroad and the need to prepare our future business leaders on how to deal with an increasingly international marketplace.

I have corresponded with leaders in the U.S. business community including the chief executive officers of many of the top U.S. companies doing business in Japan and business school deans. Most agree that American students must be exposed to the language and culture of other countries from the earliest possible age in order to remain competitive in the international marketplace.

In addition, training in foreign languages helps students to improve their verbal and intellectual capacities and encourages interest in other cultures.

While Fairfax and Arlington counties schools have expressed interest in implementing this innovative effort, a firm commitment has not been made as yet. I am hopeful, however, that the local schools will take advantage of this opportunity to assist our area's young people.

RECOGNIZING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR DISASTER

SPEECH OF

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 4, 2006

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon to join Chairmen HYDE and GALLEGLY, Mr. LANTOS and others in commemorating the Chernobyl disaster, a tragic event that has left a legacy of pain and suffering felt by the people of Ukraine and Belarus to this day. I welcome this resolution and especially its emphasis on encouraging national and international health organizations to focus their research on the public health consequences of Chernobyl.

As Co-Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I can recall the Commission hearing I chaired on the 10th anniversary of Chernobyl, at which witnesses, including then Ukrainian Ambassador Yuri Shcherbak offered compelling testimony addressing the health and demographic consequences of the world's worst nuclear disaster. I am pleased to inform colleagues that on the 25th of this month the Helsinki Commission will hold a hearing commemorating Chernobyl. I am pleased that Ukrainian Ambassador Shamshur has accepted my invitation to testify along with health experts and others.

Madam Speaker, as a strong advocate of the health of all children, including the unborn, Chernobyl is of special concern.

In Ukraine and Belarus, there is growing evidence of a steep increase in birth defects, especially an alarming 4-fold increase in spina bifida that has been documented by the Ukrainian-American Association for the Prevention of Birth Defects. Many other forms of birth defects have doubled since Chernobyl, including cataracts, deformed limbs and fingers, and cleft palates. Recent Israeli-Ukrainian studies have shown that children born to Chernobyl liquidators have a 7-fold increase in chromosome damage as compared to their siblings born prior to the Chernobyl disaster.

Last year, I authored language that was included in the State Department Authorization Act authorizing funding for assistance to improve maternal and prenatal care, especially for the purpose of helping prevent birth defects and pregnancy complications. The monies would be for individuals in the Republic of Belarus and Ukraine involved in the cleanup of the region affected by the Chernobyl disaster. We need to make sure that Chernobyl health studies and efforts to prevent birth defects through the distribution of folic acid and better prenatal care receive sufficient funding. These are funding priorities that I will continue to pursue.

Madam Speaker, the public health research community was caught off guard by the massive 80-fold increase in thyroid cancer among Chernobyl children in Belarus in 1993, and the